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## BIOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

burg is to have the honor of initiating this service; her salary is to come from the funds of a private Association—the Local Committee of Public Morals—and partly from the State Exchequer. The duties of this woman assistant of the Police Force concern the supervision of women theives and unfortunates; but this is a mere beginning. She is to have a special office where she may receive reports on the irregular morals of servant girls and shop assistants, whom she is then to visit in order to convey words of warning, as well as sympathetic counsel to the weaker victims of temptation. By the co-operation of the Public Morals Committee she is also empowered to find suitable employment for these women.

"Another of her duties will be the interrogation of first offenders who, by the provisions of a special decree, will not be led before the police court. She may also be called upon by the mothers of headstrong girls to report on their doings. But police work in the strict sense of the term is not the greater part of her duties. Provided with a fund of a few hundred pounds, the new assistant is to be something of a police court missionary, something of a guardian angel to all the women who come within her ken as being out of harmony with the law.

"She is to be empowered to handle the earnings of all the younger women who come under her supervision, and she is advised to place one-third in the savings bank, to give one-third to the parents, and to leave the remaining third with her protegee. Her signature will also obtain for her protegees clothing and other articles at cost price. Furthermore, she will have the control of the girls' hotels.

"The post is not to come into being until October 1st, and the city authorities are now anxiously advertising for some one to fill it. The particulars show that the appointment is to be given a trial for one year before being made a permanency. It is significant that the advertisements make a direct appeal to the supporters of the suffrage movement. Here, it says, in effect, is an opportunity for the suffragists to come forward to do real work; and successful accomplishment here, through the support of the movement, it adds, would do much to remove opposition to their aims and endeavors."

Since the appointment of the policewoman in Strasburg, several cities in America have secured similar appointments. Among them are Boston, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

A. W. T.

**The Biological Principles of Evolution.**—This book, by Rene Worms, of Paris, presents the sciences of Biology and Sociology in their relation to each other. The author considers Comte's classification of the sciences into mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology and sociology, and his hypothesis of the reduction of the sciences, as an awkward handling of the subject. He admits Spencer's classification into the inorganic, the organic and the superorganic as valid, but denies the irreducibility of the superorganic to the organic. Although sociology is more complex—the behavior of cells being simpler than the behavior of human individuals—a similarity of description is evident. Sociology becomes a further biology. The theory of the "organicisme," however, is not a necessary postulate of this work.

Comte distinguished two parts in sociology, dynamic and static. The latter is but a convenient abstraction which, to have any real meaning, must be

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viewed in the light of historical process. When, however, we attempt further to subdivide the science the usefulness of the classification disappears.

The fundamental principles of biology are the basis for a description of social evolution. Static as well as dynamic sociology depends upon biology, especially upon the laws of adaptation, heredity and selection. In this respect the evolutionary system of Darwin suffices as the skeleton of the science of sociology.

Adaptation of structure and function in society constitutes social evolution. The cause of such evolution is the personal desire to adapt one's self most perfectly to one's environment and best to utilize conditions to one's own profit. The result is to establish a new equilibrium between the individual and his media, which is not absolute but provisional. All social trend may be defined as adaptation. The two characteristics of adaptation are process and interaction. There exists no stability in nature, least of all in society. No adaptation endures indefinitely and each old adjustment is an obstacle to some new one. On the other hand the individual is both modified by and modifies his media.

The author then discusses the aims, the means and the results of adaptation. We recognize three kinds of media: The cosmic, the organic and the strictly social. The limits of the social media vary with civilization and with the age and condition of the individual. The theory of recapitulation applies to sociology as well as to biology, for as the social relations of the individual increase in complexity during his development so the relations of the group become more extensive and varied along with its development.

The theory of Lamarck applies to sociology, i. e., the different parts are developed through use until the whole becomes greatly modified. The process also is accumulative through many generations. Adaptation may be divided into three parts: the organism reacts to every excitation of the media, habit is formed by the recurrence of the same reaction, and this habit is made *permanent* by being transferred through inheritance to the next generation. The nervous system is the seat of most adaptation and intelligence is the highest function of the nervous system. As with the individual so with society, for to acquire knowledge of the laws governing society is to adapt the race to its environment. Ethnic variation as adaptation to new conditions is frequently noted. Such variation is more social than individual. The group further adapts itself *inter se* and to its surroundings by the development of laws, language and institutions. Just as the life of the individual comprises stages of growth, virility and decline, so with that of the group. Its degree of growth and activity depends upon waste and repair and when waste predominates, dissolution follows. A social group is limited in size by a law of efficiency, as is a protozoan. When a living cell grows to a size too great for economy it divides, and so does society. The small society, which is a group within a group, may sometimes suffer at the hands of its fellows the death penalty which it imposes on its own aged, sick, or criminal members. In biology we say that although the present generation must die, yet the race is continuous, the germplasm is immortal. May not a dying society solace itself with a like thought? Certainly this is true, for if it has been fit it will survive in its offspring, its colony, its daughter group. Its mores are its germplasm.

Heredity constitutes an opposing factor to adaptation as well as an aid. Racial characters—mental and physical—are relatively permanent. The author

## COMBATING SUICIDE

accepts the Lamarckian view of heredity, which obviously suits better his biological-sociological parallel.

The general value of this book lies in the careful formulation of the parallelism between biology and sociology. Dr. Worms has made the book of interest not only to the student of these sciences but to the casual reader as well by his wealth of illustration and his clarity of style.

**The Problem of Combating Suicide.**—(Prof. Dr. Giulio Q. Batlaglini, *Schweizerische Zeitsch. für Strafr.*, 24th year, No. 2.)<sup>1</sup> The problem of this article is, Can the criminal law act effectively against a person who attempts suicide or one who aids in the attempt or has previous knowledge of it?

The practice of confiscating property to deter was abandoned because ineffective and obviously unjust to the relatives of the suicide. Fining or imprisonment of would-be suicides would have practically the same effect. The attempt in England and America to make attempted suicide a misdemeanor has been ineffective. The Italian law does not attempt to punish suicide or the attempt to suicide, but holds guilty the one who aids or has previous knowledge without an attempt to prevent.

The threat to punish can have no deterrent effect on the suicide, because he is planning to get beyond the state's power to punish, consequently it is not an act for legal consideration. It is rather a question for morals or social ethics. The writer argues for the right of the individual to departure from a given habitation by suicide as well as by migration. A country cannot well compel a man to stay in it. Consequently no legal reaction should follow the act of suicide or the suicidal attempt.

On the other hand, the legal attitude ought to be one of attempting to relieve conditions leading to suicide as far as possible. Among such opportunities for preventive action the writer mentions the suppression of the suggestive details in the press reports of suicides. There is no longer any question in regard to the power of suggestion over the mind already half disposed to self destruction. Such repression has been advocated by private bodies in several countries. The legal prevention of the sale of poisons, except on the order of a physician, accomplishes little on account of the wide commercial use of poison in the form of insecticides, etc. The prohibition of the sale of dangerous weapons accomplishes little as long as men work with dangerous tools. Society cannot well prohibit the sale of rope or the building of two-story houses or prevent the use of illuminating gas. The thousand and one opportunities offered by the country itself and the forms of industry make suicide easy to the man who has determined to die. The state can only prevent to the extent of relieving itself from the charge of negligence. Education could do much and the state might help materially in affording abundant opportunities for healthful recreation and social diversion. The suppression of suggestive literature would certainly be a legitimate field for state action.

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